

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SECTO 08161 01 OF 04 131020Z
ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
-----021394 131025Z /12
O 130948Z AUG 77 ZFF-4
FM USDEL SECRETARY IN LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 4 SECTO 08161

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E. O. 11652 GDS
TAGS: OVIP (VANCE, CYRUS R.)
SUBJECT: ATHERTON-PRINCE SAUD MEETING AUGUST 11

1. FOLLOWING IS REPORT OF THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON AND FOREIGN MINISTER PRINCE SAUD IN TAIF, SAUDI ARABIA ON AUGUST 11. ATHERTON HAD RETURNED TO SAUDI ARABIA FROM ISRAEL TO BRIEF SAG ON SECRETARY VANCE'S VISIT TO ISRAEL FROM AUGUST 9 TO AUGUST 11.

2. AFTER INITIAL COURTESIES, ATHERTON BEGAN THE BRIEFING BY SAYING THE ENTIRE VISIT TO ISRAEL HAD BEEN DOMINATED BY THE NEGATIVE REACTION BY THE ISRAELIS TO REPORTS OF POSSIBLE FUTURE CONTACTS BETWEEN THE USG AND THE PLO, FOLLOWING PRESIDENT'S PLAINS PRESS CONFERENCE REMARKS AND COMMENTS BY DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN AND SECRETARY IN TAIF. THESE REPORTS CREATED A MASSIVE REACTION IN THE ISRAELI PRESS, AND THE ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER HAD URGED SECRETARY VANCE TO CHANGE THE USG POSITION ON THIS ISSUE. THE ISRAELIS MADE IT CLEAR THAT THEY WOULD REJECT ANY NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE PLO WHETHER OR NOT IT ACCEPTED RESOLUTIONS 242 AND 338. THEY ALSO MADE IT CLEAR THAT THEY WOULD BE OPPOSED

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TO ANY FORM OF A PALESTINIAN ENTITY.

3. FOREIGN MINISTER SAUD ASKED IF THE ISRAELIS REJECTED THE IDEA OF A PALESTINIAN HOMELAND LINKED TO JORDAN. ATHERTON REPLIED THAT THE ISRAELIS WERE DEFINITELY OPPOSED TO ANY ARRANGEMENT WHICH SUGGESTED THE CREATION OF A SEPARATE PALESTINIAN ENTITY OR TO AN ENTITY WHOSE

RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS COULD BE DETERMINED AFTER ITS CREATION.

4. THE ISRAELIS ALSO MADE A STRONG PLEA THAT THE USG NOT SUPPORT ANY AMENDMENT TO RESOLUTION 242. ATHERTON TOLD SAUD THAT THIS WAS ALSO THE U. S. POSITION. THE USG WOULD STRONGLY OPPOSE ANY EFFORT TO AMEND THE RESOLUTION, WHICH WOULD OPEN A PANDORA'S BOX.

5. ATHERTON THEN SAID THAT NEGOTIATION WITH THE PLO IS A VERY EMOTIONAL ISSUE IN ISRAEL AND ONE ON WHICH THE GOVERNMENT ENJOYS A BROAD BASE OF SUPPORT. THE ISRAELIS WOULD RALLY TO THE SUPPORT OF THE GOVERNMENT AGAINST ANY EFFORT TO CHANGE THE ISRAELI STAND ON THIS ISSUE. SAUD ASKED IF SUPPORT FOR THE BEGIN POSITION WAS REALLY THAT SUBSTANTIAL, AND ATHERTON ASSURED HIM THAT IT WAS. HE SAID THE SECRETARY HAD HAD SEPARATE MEETINGS WITH GENERAL YADIN AND SHIMON PERES WHO ARE NOW LEADERS OF THE OPPOSITION. THEY, TOO, HAD CONFIRMED THAT ISRAEL IS UNITED ON THE QUESTION OF NOT NEGOTIATING WITH THE PLO. THE ISRAELIS DO NOT GIVE ANY CREDIBILITY TO STATEMENTS THE PLO MIGHT NOW MAKE. INSTEAD, THE ISRAELIS CITE THE PLO NATIONAL CHARTER AS EVIDENCE OF THE REAL PLO POSITION. IN FACT, PRIME MINISTER BEGIN HAD DEVOTED MUCH OF HIS BANQUET TOAST TO THE SUBJECT OF THE PLO AND HE HAD SPOKEN WITH CONSIDERABLE EMOTION.

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6. ATHERTON THEN SAID THAT DESPITE THIS, THE USG IS PREPARED TO PROCEED ON THE COURSE DESCRIBED BY PRESIDENT CARTER IF THE PLO MAKES A CLEAR STATEMENT OF ACCEPTANCE OF RESOLUTION 242 AND OF ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST. THE USG WILL THEN BE PREPARED TO INITIATE CONTACTS WITH THE PLO AT A POLICY LEVEL EVEN THOUGH THIS WILL UNDOUBTEDLY GENERATE STRONG CRITICISMS IN ISRAEL AND AT HOME. SOME MEMBERS OF CONGRESS WOULD SUPPORT THE ADMINISTRATION ON THIS BUT THERE WILL BE OTHERS WHO WOULD STRONGLY CRITICIZE SUCH A STEP. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE PLO'S ACCEPTANCE OF THE RESOLUTION BE AS UNAMBIGUOUS AS POSSIBLE.

7. FOREIGN MINISTER SAID THAT HE BELIEVED THE PLO WOULD FIND IT VERY DIFFICULT TO ACCEPT THE LAST

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
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FM USDEL SECRETARY IN LONDON
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SENTENCE OF THE STATEMENT SUGGESTED BY USG, REFERRING SPECIFICALLY TO THE RIGHT OF ALL STATES IN THE AREA TO EXIST. THAT SENTENCE REITERATES ONLY ONE OF SEVERAL ELEMENTS THAT CONSTITUTE THE OVERALL RESOLUTION AND, IN FACT, IS PROBABLY THE LEAST AMBIGUOUS OF THESE ELEMENTS. IF THE PLO WERE TO REITERATE THIS ONE ELEMENT, THEY WOULD FEEL THAT THEY SHOULD ALSO REITERATE THE OTHER SECTIONS AS WELL. IN DOING SO, THEY WOULD NO DOUBT PUT THEIR OWN INTERPRETATION ON THE OTHER MORE AMBIGUOUS ELEMENTS.

8. ATHERTON SAID THAT IF THE PLO ACCEPTED THE RESOLUTION BUT FAILED TO INCLUDE THAT SENTENCE, IT COULD CAUSE US PROBLEMS BECAUSE IN OUR OWN PREVIOUS STATEMENTS WE HAD USUALLY REFERRED TO BOTH THE PLO'S FAILURE TO ACCEPT 242 AND ITS FAILURE TO ACCEPT THE RIGHT OF ISRAEL TO EXIST. GIVEN THE PLO'S HISTORICAL POSITION OF CALLING FOR THE DISAPPEARANCE OF ISRAEL, SUCH AN EXPLICIT STATEMENT WAS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT TO AVOID ANY ELEMENT OF AMBIGUITY.

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9. THE FOREIGN MINISTER SAID THAT HE HAD AS YET RECEIVED NO FINAL ANSWER FROM THE PLO, BUT HE HAD SENT THE USG PROPOSED LANGUAGE TO SADAT AND ASSAD. THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT IS PROBABLY DISCUSSING IT WITH THE PLO IN EGYPT. SADAT MIGHT HAVE SOME REPLY FOR THE

SECRETARY WHEN THEY MET IN ALEXANDRIA.

10. THE FOREIGN MINISTER SAID THAT THE PLO'S INSISTENCE ON NOT MENTIONING ISRAEL BY NAME REFLECTS THE FACT THAT THE ISRAELIS REFUSE TO MENTION A PALESTINIAN STATE BY NAME. ATHERTON MENTIONED HIS CONCERN THAT SOME SPOKESMAN FOR THE PLO MIGHT STAND UP AND EFFECTIVELY NEGATE THE ACCEPTANCE STATEMENT AFTER IT IS MADE -- E.G., BY REAFFIRMING THAT THE NATIONAL CHARTER REMAINS THE PLO POSITION OR SAYING THAT THE PLO ATTITUDE TOWARD ISRAEL HAD NOT CHANGED. IF THAT HAPPENS IT WILL CREATE SERIOUS PROBLEMS. SAUD SAID IF THE PLO ISSUES A STATEMENT ALONG THE LINES WE HAVE BEEN DISCUSSING ACCEPTING RESOLUTION 242, THIS WOULD REPRESENT A CHANGE IN THE PLO POSITION AS STATED IN THE CHARTER. IT WAS NOW UP TO THE PLO TO DECIDE WHAT IT WOULD DO. IF IT DID NOT ISSUE THE NECESSARY STATEMENT, AT LEAST THE ARAB GOVERNMENTS HAD DONE WHAT THEY COULD. (COMMENT: WHILE THE MEANING OF THIS REMARK IS NOT CLEAR, IT COULD BE READ TO IMPLY THAT IF THE PLO FAILED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE PRESENT OPPORTUNITY, THIS WOULD NOT DETER THE ARAB GOVERNMENTS FROM PROCEEDING TOWARD NEGOTIATIONS.)

11. THE FOREIGN MINISTER EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT HE WAS HAPPY TO SEE SO MUCH ATTENTION PAID TO THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE, SINCE HE BELIEVED THAT IT SHOULD BE THE MAJOR TOPIC FOR NEGOTIATION. ATHERTON AGREED THAT THIS
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ISSUE MUST BE BROUGHT OUT ON THE TABLE BUT AFFIRMED ONCE AGAIN THAT THE ISRAELIS' REACTION ON THIS ISSUE HAD BEEN VERY STRONG. SAUD SAID THAT THEIR REACTION COULD HAVE BEEN STRONGER AND, IN FACT, THE SAG HAD THOUGHT THAT IT WOULD BE. HE ALSO HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT THE REACTION IN THE U.S. HAD NOT BEEN STRONG AND THAT THE ADMINISTRATION HAD SUPPORT AT HOME FOR THE POSITION IT HAD TAKEN.

12. TURNING TO OUR DRAFT STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES, ATHERTON SAID THE SECRETARY HAD REPORTED TO THE ISRAELIS THE VIEWS EXPRESSED ON THESE PRINCIPLES IN THE ARAB CAPITALS HE HAD VISITED. ATHERTON THEN PROCEEDED TO DESCRIBE THE ISRAELI REACTION TO THE SECRETARY'S FIVE PRINCIPLES. SAUD INTERRUPTED TO INQUIRE ABOUT THE SIXTH PRINCIPLE, I.E., THE QUESTION OF JERUSALEM. ATHERTON REPLIED THAT THE SECRETARY DID NOT BELIEVE HE COULD INTRODUCE A SIXTH PRINCIPLE HALFWAY THROUGH HIS CURRENT ROUND OF TALKS, BUT THAT IT WOULD CERTAINLY HAVE TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN

ANY FUTURE ROUNDS. AS FOR THE ISRAELI REACTION TO THE FIVE PRINCIPLES, THEIR POSITION HAD NOT CHANGED AT ALL FROM THAT TAKEN BY PRIME MINISTER BEGIN IN WASHINGTON. PRINCIPLE FOUR WAS UNACCEPTABLE BECAUSE IT REFERRED TO WITHDRAWAL ON ALL FRONTS AND PRINCIPLE FIVE WAS UNACCEPTABLE IN ITS ENTIRETY.

13. ATHERTON THEN SAID THAT THE ISRAELIS' POSITION HAD ALSO NOT CHANGED ON THE MODALITIES FOR PARTICIPA-

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FM USDEL SECRETARY IN LONDON
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TION IN THE MEPC. THE ISRAELIS DID NOT OBJECT TO NON-PLO PALESTINIANS BEING INCLUDED AS MEMBERS OF THE JORDANIAN DELEGATION, BUT THEY WOULD OBJECT IF THE JORDANIANS INCLUDED ANY KNOWN MEMBERS OF THE PLO. ISRAEL IS ALSO OPPOSED TO A UNIFIED ARAB DELEGATION. SAUD SAID THAT, FOLLOWING THE SECRETARY'S VISIT TO TAIF, SAUDI ARABIA HAS URGED EGYPT TO RECONSIDER ITS OPPOSITION TO A UNIFIED DELEGATION.

14. ATHERTON CONFIRMED THAT THE ISRAELIS HAD AGREED TO PROVIDE A DRAFT TEXT OF A PEACE TREATY TO THE USG. WHEN SECRETARY VANCE RAISED THIS POSSIBILITY, THEY HAD FIRST DELAYED THEIR RESPONSE BUT HAD LATER AGREED TO HIS SUGGESTION. SECRETARY VANCE HAD TOLD ALL THE PARTIES THAT HE WANTED THEIR TEXTS IN TIME FOR US TO STUDY THEM PRIOR TO THE NEXT ROUND OF TALKS DURING THE UNGA. HE HAD ALSO CONFIRMED TO THE ISRAELIS THAT THE USG WOULD USE THE ISRAELI TEXT AS WELL AS THE TEXTS FROM THE VARIOUS ARAB STATES TO PROPOSE SUGGESTIONS OF ITS OWN WHICH WOULD THEN CONSTITUTE A BASIS FOR THE DISCUSSIONS WITH FOREIGN MINISTERS

IN NEW YORK.

15. THE ISRAELIS DID NOT WELCOME THE LATTER IDEA
BECAUSE THEY MAINTAIN THAT THEY WANT NO PRE-
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NEGOTIATIONS ON SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES PRIOR TO THE MEPC.
THE SECRETARY, HOWEVER, HAD REPLIED THAT HE WISHED
TO NARROW THE DIFFERENCES AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE PRIOR TO
THE CONFERENCE IN ORDER TO IMPROVE ITS CHANCES FOR
SUCCESS. ATHERTON ALSO TOLD SAUD THAT BEGIN HAD
AGREED TO SEND DAYAN TO NEW YORK IN SEPTEMBER FOR THE
NEXT ROUND OF MIDDLE EAST PEACE TALKS.

16. ATHERTON SAID THAT THE SECRETARY IS NOW MORE
CONVINCED THAN EVER OF THE NECESSITY FOR GREATER
SPECIFICITY ON ALL SIDES. HE HOPES THAT WE CAN NOW
ENTER A TEXTUAL PHASE IN WHICH SPECIFIC WORDING
OF PEACE TREATIES CAN BE DISCUSSED.

17. ATHERTON SAID THAT THE ISRAELIS HAD EXPRESSED
DISAPPOINTMENT OVER THE ARAB POSITIONS. SECRETARY
VANCE HAD SAID, HOWEVER, DURING HIS PRESS CONFERENCE
IN ISRAEL THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO PROGRESS IN
NARROWING THE GAPS BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES SINCE HE HAD
LEFT TAIF ALTHOUGH THERE HAD BEEN SOME PROGRESS PRIOR
TO HIS ISRAELI STOP ON THE ISSUE OF THE NATURE OF
PEACE.

18. ATHERTON THEN DESCRIBED THE DISCUSSION WHICH HAD
TAKEN PLACE ON LEBANON. BOTH SIDES AGREED THAT THERE
HAD BEEN SOME RECENT INTENSIFICATION OF THE FIGHTING.
THE ISRAELIS SAID THEY HAD TWO PRIMARY CONCERNS:
(A) THE PALESTINIANS SEEMED TO BE CONSOLIDATING THEIR
POSITIONS IN THE SOUTH; AND (B) THE PALESTINIANS
SEEMED TO BE TAKING THE INITIATIVE TO PUT PRESSURE
ON THE CHRISTIAN VILLAGES NEAR THE ISRAELI BORDERS
AND THE ISRAELIS FELT AN OBLIGATION TO PROTECT THEM.
THE FOREIGN MINISTER ASKED ON WHAT BASIS DID THE
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ISRAELIS TAKE IT UPON THEMSELVES TO BE THE PROTECTORS
OF THE CHRISTIANS IN LEBANON. SAUD SUGGESTED THAT
THE REAL PURPOSE BEHIND THE ISRAELI POSITION WAS
TO UPSET THE CURRENT PEACE EFFORTS BY THREATENING
TO START AN ARMED CONFLICT.

19. ATHERTON REPLIED THAT THE USG HAD BEEN VERY FIRM ON THE SUBJECT OF POSSIBLE ISRAELI MILITARY ACTION IN LEBANON AND HAD STRONGLY ADVISED THE ISRAELIS NOT TO MOVE MILITARY UNITS ACROSS THE BORDER. ATHERTON SAID THE ISRAELI MILITARY SEEMED SOMEWHAT MORE REALISTIC THAN THE POLITICIANS ABOUT THE PROBLEMS OF MILITARY INTERVENTION. THE MILITARY LEADERSHIP WANTED LEBANESE ARMY UNITS LOYAL TO SARKIS TO COME INTO THE TERRITORY TO MAINTAIN SECURITY. THE ISRAELI POLITICAL LEADERSHIP, WHILE ALSO SUPPORTING THIS IDEA, CLAIMED THAT THE CHRISTIAN VILLAGERS HAD COME TO THE ISRAELIS FOR THEIR SUPPORT AND INDICATED THAT ISRAEL WOULD NOT LET THESE VILLAGERS DOWN.

20. THE FOREIGN MINISTER RESPONDED WITH SOME EMOTION THAT THE USG MUST SEND A CLEAR PUBLIC SIGNAL TO THE ISRAELIS TO PREVENT THEM FROM ACTING MILITARILY IN SOUTH LEBANON. HE SAID THAT THE CHTAURA AGREEMENT HAD BEEN A MAJOR STEP FORWARD AND THE ISRAELIS SHOULD GIVE THE PARTIES TO THE AGREEMENT TIME TO CARRY IT OUT.

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
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FM USDEL SECRETARY IN LONDON
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HE SAID THAT THE PALESTINIAN ARMED GROUPS ARE NOW PLANNING TO MOVE AWAY FROM THE BORDER. THE ISRAELIS SHOULD REALIZE THAT THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM IN LEBANON IS NOW ON THE WAY TO A SOLUTION, BUT THEY APPARENTLY WISH TO USE SOUTH LEBANON AS AN EXCUSE TO

BLOCK U.S. PEACE EFFORTS.

21. ATHERTON REPLIED THAT THE USG HAD MADE THREE POINTS TO THE ISRAELIS: FIRST, USG SUPPORTS SARKIS AND HOPES TO STRENGTHEN HIS POSITION: SECOND, THE USG WOULD REACT VERY STRONGLY TO ANY ISRAELI MILITARY INITIATIVES IN THE SOUTH: AND THIRD, IF SARKIS DECIDES TO CALL FOR UN PEACEKEEPING FORCES IN THE SOUTH, THE USG WOULD SUPPORT SUCH A REQUEST. ATHERTON SAID THE ISRAELIS HAD AGREED THAT UN FORCES COULD BE SENT IN IF TEMPTIES COULD BE WORKED OUT.

22. ON THE QUESTION OF ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, THERE WERE NO CHANGES IN EITHER THE U.S. OR THE ISRAELI POSITIONS. THE ISRAELIS DID NOT INDICATE ONE WAY OR THE OTHER WHETHER THEY PLANNED
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ANY ADDITIONAL SETTLEMENTS BUT HAD MADE NO COMMITMENT NOT TO ESTABLISH NEW SETTLEMENTS.

23. FOREIGN MINISTER SAUD THEN REMARKED THERE DID NOT SEEM TO BE ANY FLEXIBILITY IN THE ISRAELI POSITION. SAUD EXPRESSED DOUBT THAT MANY MORE CONCESSIONS WOULD BE POSSIBLE ON THE ARAB SIDE IF THERE WERE NO CORRESPONDING MOVEMENT BY THE ISRAELIS. ATHERTON REPLIED THAT WHEN THE DUST SETTLES HE HOPES THAT SOME OF THE MORE REFLECTIVE ISRAELIS WOULD BEGIN TO SEE THESE PROBLEMS IN A SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT LIGHT.

24. FOREIGN MINISTER AND ATHERTON THEN DISCUSSED THE SUBJECT OF ECONOMIC AID TO PAKISTAN, WHICH WILL BE REPORTED SEPTEL.

25. DEPARTMENT IS REQUESTED TO REPEAT THIS MESSAGE TO AMMAN, BEIRUT, CAIRO, DAMASCUS, JIDDA AND TEL AVIV.
VANCE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PALESTINIANS, SECTO, TROOP DEPLOYMENT, CAT-B, BRIEFINGS, PEACE PLANS, UNGA RESOLUTIONS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977SECTO08161
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: OA
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: P840072-2551
Format: TEL
From: LONDON SECRETARY
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770864/aaaaccbf.tel
Line Count: 427
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: a030f25a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Page Count: 8
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1609526
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ATHERTON-PRINCE SAUD MEETING AUGUST 11
TAGS: OVIP, PDEV, PBOR, US, SA, IS, XF, LE, PLO, (ATHERTON, ALFRED L), (SA\UD, SA\UD IBN FAYSAL AL)
To: STATE AMMAN
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/a030f25a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009